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## C&O Canal National Historical Park News

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### **C&O Canal Invites Feedback on Proposal to Increase and Expand Entrance and Other Fees Park-wide**

HAGERSTOWN, Md. - Chesapeake & Ohio Canal National Historical Park (C&O Canal) in compliance with a nation-wide review on updating entrance fees is inviting the public to comment on proposed entrance and other fee increases. Fees collected at the park are critical to the park's operation, and 100% of the fees collected at the C&O Canal are invested in park projects that improve facilities and experiences for park visitors.

In a memo dated September 5, 2014, National Park Service Director Jon Jarvis, authorized park superintendents to begin a civic engagement process associated with increasing entrance fees within units of the National Park System. In an effort to standardize entrance fees, the 131 units that charge entrance fees have been placed in one of four categories based on size, complexity of operations and typical visitation patterns. To arrive at greater consistency around the Service, parks have been asked to bring their fees into compliance with others within their category. C&O Canal is in Category 1. Other similar parks within Category 1 in this region include: Antietam National Battlefield; Fort Washington Park; Great Falls Park, Virginia; Harpers Ferry National Historical Park; Manassas National Battlefield Park, and Prince William Forest Park.

C&O Canal's current park entrance fee has been in place since 2002. The only location in the park where an entrance fee is charged is at the Great Falls Tavern area off of MacArthur Boulevard in Potomac, MD. The park proposes to expand entrance fee collection to all areas of the park outside of the District of Columbia and to implement a parking fee at Fletchers Cove. As part of this fee expansion, the park proposes to discontinue the reciprocal agreement currently in place with Great Falls Park, Virginia, which allows visitors to purchase a day pass or annual pass that is valid at both the C&O Canal and Great Falls Park, VA entrance stations.

The park also proposes to extend the daily pass effective dates from three days to seven days to better align with popular recreational activities, such as cycling the 184.5 mile towpath.

The proposed entrance/parking fees that would become effective no sooner than May 1, 2015 are as follows:

#### **Park Annual Pass:**

- Current: \$20 Great Falls, MD only
- Proposed: \$30 park-wide outside of the District of Columbia

#### **Per Vehicle Pass:**

- Current: \$5/person for 3 days Great Falls, MD only
- Proposed:
  - District of Columbia line to Seneca Creek (near Canal towpath mile 22)
    - \$15 for 7 days

- West of Seneca Creek to Cumberland, MD
  - \$5 in 2015 for 7 days
  - \$15 in 2017 for 7 days

**Per Person Pass:**

- Current: \$3/person for 3 days Great Falls, MD only
- Proposed:
  - District of Columbia line to Seneca Creek(near towpath mile 22)
    - \$7 for 7 days
  - West of Seneca Creek to Cumberland, MD
    - \$3 in 2015 for 7 days
    - \$7 in 2017 for 7 days

**Motorcycle Pass:**

- Current:\$5 for 3 days Great Falls, MD only
- Proposed:
  - District of Columbia line to Seneca Creek(near towpath mile 22)
    - \$10 for 7 days
  - West of Seneca Creek to Cumberland, MD
    - \$5 in 2015 for 7 days
    - \$10 in 2017 for 7 days

Entrance fees are not charged to persons under 16 years of age or holders of the America the Beautiful National Parks and Federal Recreational Senior, Access or Military Passes. These passes may be obtained at the park. In addition, the park offers at least six fee-free days per year.

C&O Canal NHP is also proposing to increase or institute fees for campgrounds, picnic pavilions and parking at Fletchers Cove. Comparability studies have been completed to determine rates. The proposals are as follows:

**Drive-In Campgrounds:**

- Single Site Rate: Current: \$10 per night, Proposed \$20 per night
- Group Site Rate: Current \$20 per night, Proposed \$40 per night

**Hiker-Biker Camping Sites:** Current: No Charge, Proposed \$20 per night

**Picnic Pavilion:** Carderock Pavilion

- Monday-Thursday: Current \$150 per day, Proposed \$250 per day
- Friday-Sunday & Holidays: Current \$250 per day, Proposed \$350 per day

**Parking:** Fletchers Cove - There is currently no parking charge; however, the option to establish a parking charge is being evaluated and proposed for comment.

“We are committed to keeping the park affordable and providing visitors with the best possible experiences,” Superintendent Kevin Brandt said. “Fee revenue is absolutely critical to the park operation, and we ask for the public's feedback and support. National Parks are still one of America's best bargains. I don't know of anything a family can do for 7 days for just \$15. The entrance fee provides full access to the park including: the historic towpath; more than 17 miles of backcountry trails; numerous visitor centers and interpretive programs and access to the Potomac River. The park is a popular place where people come to recreate, to learn, to be challenged physically and to be inspired and renewed; however, the park cannot run itself for free, and our fee revenue is essential to providing for public safety, recreation and resource protection.”

Entrance fees have supported a wide range of projects that improved park conditions and visitor experience including: restoration of the Great Falls Tavern, Western Maryland Railroad Lift Bridge, Lockhouse 44, Ferry Hill Plantation and Hancock Visitor Centers; new picnic tables, grills and fire rings for campgrounds throughout park; developing and installing exhibits in visitor centers such as Great Falls and Ferry Hill Plantation; repairing park wells and hand pumps; removing trees from the canal, installation of a water fountain in Williamsport; restoration of historic lockhouses; improving ADA accessibility at park comfort stations, repairing replica canal boats used in interpretive and education programs, and rehabilitation of the CCC era restroom in Great Falls into a space for the free Bike Loaner program. Additional revenue raised by a fee increase could be used to restore additional historic structures such as Swains Lockhouse; Conococheague, Tonoloway and Seneca Creek aqueducts ; expand the park's ability to maintain the towpath; improve campground safety by establishing campground host sites at drive-in campgrounds; restore water in the canal between Lock 5 and Anglers; extend the re-watered section of the canal in Hancock; preservation work on the Paw Paw Tunnel; improve river access at Fletchers Cove and Dam #4, and increase interpretive and educational programming park-wide.

The C&O Canal is a strong economic engine for the area. In 2013, the C&O Canal hosted nearly 5 million visitors who contributed more than \$80 million to the local economy and supported more than 1,000 jobs related to tourism.

To provide comments on the proposed fee increases, go to: <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/cocanalfees> The public has the opportunity to comment on the increases for a 48-day period ending on February 22, 2015. Written comments should be provided through this website.

Interested citizens are invited to discuss the proposed fee increases at public meetings to be held in various locations around the park as follows:

January 21, 2015, at the Brunswick City Hall, Council Meeting Room, 1 West Potomac Street, Brunswick, MD 21716 from 6:30-8:00 PM

January 27, 2015, at C&O Canal Park Headquarters, 1850 Dual Highway, Hagerstown, MD 21740 from 6:30-8:00 PM

January 29, 2015, at Canal Place, 13 Canal St, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, Cumberland, MD 21502 from 6:30-8:00 PM

February 5, 2015, at Glen Echo Town Hall, 6106 Harvard Ave, Glen Echo, MD 20812 from 7:00-8:30 PM

Following the comment period and public meetings, feedback will determine how, or if, a fee increase would be implemented.

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